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ABSTRACT

Two methods of researching second language learning are described, analyzed, and compared: student diaries giving a first-person account of the second language learning experience; and participant observation, in which the observer is in the language learning situation recording in descriptive terms all possible data about the situation. Pedagogical claims made about the two research methods are outlined from the relevant literature, and a study comparing the two methods is presented. The study used data from a completed study of older adult learner characteristics. Diaries written by both the older students and others in the class were compared with descriptive information gathered by an observer in the classroom and other situations in which smaller groups of the learners were participating. The data gathered in the study were examined in light of the pedagogical claims made about the methods. It was found that some of the claims for each method were upheld, and some needed modification. Some additional strengths and weaknesses that might be of use in making research decisions were identified, including the amount of researcher time needed for gathering data, certainty of gathering adequate data, and ease of quantification. It is suggested that researchers choosing between the two methods consider these factors: the need to focus on the individual learner, the desire not to change the learning situation, the desire to let the research have immediate learner use, available researcher time, and certainty and quantifiability of data. (MSE)

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TWO WINDOWS ON THE CLASSROOM WORLD: DIARY STUDIES AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION DIFFERENCES

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Anyone who has engaged in research of any kind knows that there are many different approaches that can be used to answer any research question. In second language acquisition and classroom research, several writers about research theory have made a division between two major types of methods. The first division consists of the traditional research method borrowed from the physical sciences; that is, the experimental method. Ochsner (1979), in his discussion of research methods, aligns this kind of research with other research having names such as nomothetic, empirical, quantitative, scientific, natural science, classical science, and vertical thinking (p. 55). Basically this type of research is characterized by hypothesis testing of carefully controlled and measured variables under controlled conditions or in controlled situations.

The second general kind of research is sometimes called naturalistic research. Ochsner would align this research with other research having names such as idiographic, rational, qualitative, humanistic, observational, phenomenological, Geisteswissenschaften, grounded/structural, ethnomethodology, ethnography/ethnology, and lateral thinking (p. 55). This kind of research is characterized by observation and description of data under natural circumstances.

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Ochsner proposes that persons engaged in second language acquisition (and he subsumes language learning in that term) should "alternate between two equal kinds of research" (p. 53)--the nomothetic experimental method, as he calls it, and a hermeneutic non-experimental method. Ochsner claims that the use of both kinds of research will allow us to both explain and understand SLA.

Long (1980) also discusses the differences between two methods of classroom research. He makes his division between structured observational systems such as Flander's Interaction Analysis and less structured systems like ethnography. Both the hermeneutic research which Ochsner discusses and the ethnographic research which Long discusses have sometimes been called "naturalistic" research. Figure 1 lists the characteristics (especially the contrasting ones) which are generally attributed to experimental and naturalistic methods used in SLA.

Under either of the two major divisions of empirical and naturalistic research, however, there are several research designs to choose from. For example, Hatch and Farhady (1982), in their book, Research Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics, list two designs as "True Experimental Designs" and several more as fitting in the categories of "Pre-Experimental Designs" and "Quasi-Experimental Designs." In a similar vein, Long lists several different types of research, such as diary studies and participant observation, in his examination of more naturalistic methods.

Naturalistic methods of research have become more popular in recent years. This is partially due to the work of research methodologists like Ochsner and Long, but it is also due to the work of Bailey (In

EXPERIMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS	NATURALISTIC CHARACTERISTICS
Generalizable through--	Not generalizable except through-
•Internal validity	•External validity
•Group statistical average	•Individual truth on factors
•Large N chosen randomly	•Massive data about small N
•Controlled circumstances	•Natural settings and circumstances
Implies a single reality/answer	Implies multiple realities/answers
•Hypothesis testing	•Hypothesis generating
•Pre-conceived assumptions about system	•No pre-conceptions so factors can be discovered
•Instruments structure what can be seen so observation is an answer	•Observer sees and then structures so observation is a tool
	•More detailed, comprehensive, richer
Looks for causes, explanations, HOW event occurred	Looks for purposes, understanding, WHY event occurred
•Leads to prediction	•Leads to interpretation
	•Same data can be interpreted differently
Objective because it has the perspective of outsider	Subjective because it has the perspective of participant
	•Bias recognized; better to trust a known bias than a bias hidden behind supposed objectivity
	•Probes own motives and undering
	•Categories formed are guided by participants' own orientations
	•Perceived factors may not be real factors
Main focus on external data Measurable factors	Main focus on internal data
	•Personal factors
	•Psychological factors
	•Affective factors
Treats human beings as things	Treats human beings as humans
	•May increase empathy of observer
Replication possible	Replication impossible
	•Only as good as person doing it
	•Problems with retrievability of data
Can require only a short time	Usually requires a long time

Figure 1: Comparison of Traditional and Naturalistic Methods

press, 1980a, and 1980b), Schumann and Schumann (1977), and others who have used the methods and shown them to be of worth. As more methods

have become popular, researchers are faced with more choices as they confront any research question. A correct choice of research methodology is important because, as Hatch and Farhady put it:

> There are, clearly, many different approaches to take in answering any research question ... Selecting one particular approach should depend on the nature of the research question and the hypotheses that you have made ... If you select the most appropriate research method and follow the conventions which make it systematic, you should be able to make valid statements about the results of your study when you finish (p. 6).

With these words in mind, then, the purpose of this paper is to provide information about two naturalistic methods in comparison to each other so classroom researchers can make informed and wise choices. The two methods to be examined are diary studies and participant observation.

A definition of the diary study is given in Bailey and Ochsner (1980):

> A diary in second language learning, acquisition or teaching is an account of a second language experience as recorded in a first person journal ... The central characteristic of the diary studies is that they are introspective: the diarist studies his own teaching or learning ... The diary studies differ from SLA case studies primarily because the diarist supplements his observation of events with introspection and self-observations. However, the first person diaries may also be (re)analyzed by other researchers (p. 2).

Diary studies may differ from one another in several ways, some of which are apparent from the Bailey and Ochsner definition. First, the researcher may or may not be the diarist him- or herself. This means that the diarists may differ in their degree of naivete about the language learning process. This may be an important consideration when one

realizes that most of the diaries used in classroom research studies so far have been kept by language pedagogues turned language learners for the purposes of their studies.

Another way in which diary studies may differ is in the degree of retrospection which is used in writing them. They may be written during the language class, shortly after, or a long time after. Most diaries used in second language acquisition studies have been written shortly after the classes being researched. A third way in which diaries may differ is in the language in which they are kept--L1 or L2. Interactive journals are often kept in the L2 because that is the language of the teacher. Most other diaries have been kept in L1 because learners can express themselves more fully in their native tongue. For the purposes of this paper, any study is considered a diary study if there is a first person account of the second language learning experience regardless of who the diarist is (researcher or not), when the diary is written, or what the language of the diary is.

Participant observation, on the other hand, is described in the following manner by Long (1980):

> In a participant study, the observer takes a regular part in the activities he or she is studying, e.g., by becoming a member of a street gang or joining a political group. When the researcher further chooses not to reveal his or her true identity and motives, there is the opportunity to observe properly natural behavior ... Participant observers do not always follow the course of concealment. Some of those that hide their motives attempt to become, at least temporarily, true members of the "culture" they are studying by adopting its values and life style as much as possible.
>
> Ethnographers do not set out to test particular hypotheses in any formal sense. Instead, they try to describe all aspects of whatever they experience in the greatest possible detail. This they accomplish principally by making extensive written notes, usually recording their observations as soon as possible <u>after</u> involvement in the day's activities in order to avoid compromising their own participant role. Note-taking is as systematic and as thorough as

the individual ethnographer cares to make it, and much has been written on the subject.

As this description shows, the participant observation may also differ in several ways. For example, the observer may choose to hide his or her real intentions and identity and become, as much as possible, a member of the group being studied (in this case, the language class). Participant observations may also differ in how much of a participant the observer is. Long (1980) differentiates between participant and non-participant observation but other research methodologists (e.g., Bogdan & Taylor, 1975) use the term "participant observation" to refer to the research whether the observer is a full participant or not. Patton (1980) claims that the observer may be either a full participant or a complete non-participant in the qualitative research mode. For the purposes of this paper, a study will be considered participant observation if the observer is in the language learning situation (classroom) recording in descriptive terms all possible data whether the observer is a full or lesser participant in the actual language learning.

Several claims have been made for the strengths and weaknesses of these two research methods. These claims are summarized and compared in Figure 2.

As can be seen from Figure 2, one major difference between these methods is in the actual focus that the research method handles well. The diary study is one of the best methods for getting at the individual learner variables. Long (1980), for example, points out that with diary studies, introspection supplements other observation work. The Schumanns' work (1977, 1980) has also shown how diary studies cast light on

DIARY STUDIES	PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION
Good for focus on individual learner; self is object of study	Good for showing influence of school, community, societal context
•Gives introspective supplements	•Difficult to obtain complete distribution of attitudes
•Shows personal variables	
Takes place in most natural of settings	Never sure of naturalness of setting with observer present
•Especially true if diarist is researcher and/or naive	•More natural if researcher is full participant in learning
•Dual role as participant and diarist may be obstacle	•Interlanguage systems are very sensitive to even small differences in setting
•Retrospective journals not as good because immediacy is lost	
•Re-written versions lose the essence of the diary; primary data needs to be given	
Can be a tool for purposes other than research	Allows testing of validity of ideas during period of observation
•Tool to self-awareness, evaluation, improvement	•Can check on observers' conclusions
•Could be used as tool to orient other learners	•Allows many supplements in method

Figure 2: Summary of Claims about Two Research Methods

personal variables in language learning and Francine Schumann has even made a list of ten of these variables in her report from a diary study.

On the other hand, participant observation allows the researcher to see the way classroom behaviors, both of the teacher and the student, are influenced by the school, community, or entire society in which they are located. Long says that this is particularly true of the participant observation studies where the researcher is not a full participant (the kind he calls non-participant). Tarone, Swain, and Fathman (1976) have pointed out that environmental variables have not been investigated

sufficiently in SLA research. They suggest that the "most immediately 'relevant' research for the classroom should be research done in the classroom." Participant observation seems to be a good tool for that particular kind of research. However, methodologists not specializing in SLA research (e.g., Wilson, 1977) have cautioned that even with participant observation it is difficult to get enough data to get a complete distribution of attitudes within a group to say nothing of a community or a society.

Another claim that research methodologists make for the diary study is that it takes place in the most natural setting possible, that there is no research intrusion as there is in many other kinds of research. This is true as long as the diarist is a participant in the class although the keeping of the diary itself may be causing some difference in the language learning situation. For example, Leichman (n. d.) says that the dual role as participant and diarist might cause an obstacle to the study of classroom learning. She also claims that retrospective journals are not as good because the immediacy of the situation is lost. As she says, "the immediacy of the problem is not there causing the anxieties or joys. One's memory is generally somewhat selective and tinted by subsequent events or thoughts" (p.5). Leichman also says that any re-written version of a diary study without the primary data (actual data from the journal provided) loses the essence of the study. This suggests that under those conditions, the advantage of having the diary study in the natural setting might be weakened.

One of the weaknesses of the participant observation is the fact that the researcher may actually be changing the situation. Long (1980) puts it this way,

> While nonparticipant observers ... usually familiarize participants with their presence ...and try to establish a nonthreatening relationship before collecting data, there is never the certainty that what they see is exactly what would have occurred if they had not been present (p. 27).

These arguments basically show what would be considered a weakness in the participant observation method. However, the arguments are much weaker when the researcher is a complete participant in the classroom, when he or she is actually learning the language with the rest of the students. In a similar way, there may be more influence in the diary study than at first appears also.

One strong claim for participant observation is that it allows the testing of the validity of the researcher's conclusions as the observation is actually taking place. Verification can be sought simply by eliciting comments from class members about a researcher's analysis or verification can be sought in further observation of participants' verbal and nonverbal behavior. In the broadest form of participant observation, verification of the researcher's conclusions can also be sought through the use of structured instruments much like those used in experimental methods. This verification is one of the strengths of participant observation.

A strength in using the diary study lies in the fact that it can be used for purposes other than the research itself. For example, Bailey (1980a) claims that the keeping of a journal holds "considerable promise both as a research tool and as an aid to self-awareness" (pp. 64-65). Francine Schumann (1980) also suggests a way that a journal might be a tool for something other than research:

> ... special orientation may be necessary to equip women language learners in countries such as Iran with techniques for gaining ac-

> cess to sufficient native speakers and thus sufficient input to acquire the TL. Perhaps journals of women who are successful second language learners in this type of situation would provide such orientation.

So, the diary study may serve other than research purposes.

Although claims of different strengths and weaknesses have been made for these two research methods, no researchers had systematically examined the claims by comparing results of the methods used in the same situation. The study reported here was designed to give such a comparison. The data used in performing the comparison had already been gathered as part of a different study which looked at the learning characteristics of older adult language learners (Brown, 1983). How that data was gathered and then the methods of data analysis for the purposes of this study are given below.

The learners studied in the original research consisted of thirty-six native English speakers involved in an eight-week intensive Spanish course for missionaries at the Missionary Training Center of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Eighteen of the learners (8M and 10F) were older adults (over 55) and eighteen of the learners (8M and 10F) were young adults (under 25). Their training consisted of eight weeks of intensive (sometimes even more than eight hours a day) language and culture classes.

For the diary study, all the subjects as well as all other students in the same classes with them were given notebooks to use as language learning journals and were asked to write in them their thoughts and feelings as a language learner. The specific instructions for the journal are given in Appendix A. Approximately 61 journals were turned in and became the data for the diary study.

For the participant observation, the researcher was a participant observer in the activities of both the older and the younger subjects during 43 different observation periods. The periods varied in length from 15 minutes to 90 minutes and took place at various times throughout the day from 9 a. m. to 10 p. m. They also took place on varying days throughout the week and in various locations including classrooms, cafeterias, halls, dormitories, and gymnasiums. Some of the observations were of activities in which only one of the subjects was involved and others included as many as 18 subjects at one time. There were approximately 44 hours of observations.

Field notes for the observations were kept by writing shorthand and some longhand notes while actually in the classrooms or other meetings where notetaking would be unobtrusive. Shorthand notes for all other activities were jotted down as soon as possible after the encounter took place. Eleven of the 43 observation sessions were audio-recorded.

Final observation notes were written as soon as possible after the observations and consisted of expanded versions of the original quick notes taken during the sessions and/or immediately after them. This procedure followed as closely as possible the notetaking methods suggested by Spradley (1980). The notes described the settings of the observations as well as the actions, mannerisms, and words of the participants. Possible interpretations of what these all meant were also inserted in the final notes although these were kept separate from the descriptions through the use of brackets. There was a total of 430.5 double-spaced pages of final field notes. In addition to these regular field notes, there were 32 pages of supplementary materials gathered

during the participant observations. These supplementary materials consisted of handouts which were given to the learners in the process of their activities as well as a large collection of poems, anecdotes, and pieces which one of the older learners produced because he had memorized all of them and thought they might interest others. Field notes produced with the aid of an audio-tape tended to be about 50% longer than those produced solely from notes by hand.

For the purposes of this comparison of research methods, the dates and places of the observations were noted and all of the journal data from all learners who were observed on those days were collected. This gave a total of 23 days for which there were 160.5 pages of field notes from participant observations and diary entries by 65 members of the same classes. The journal entries and the observation field notes for the same days were read and compared specifically looking for evidence that any of the claims made by research methodologists could be verified in the data.

Evidence presented in this paper for the claims of the research methodologists will be qualitative in nature, principally taken from the diaries themselves and from the field notes. Only one or two pieces of evidence will be presented for each point, but unless noted, there is a larger pool of evidence from which the examples were selected.

The first strength that is claimed for diary studies is that they are good for focus on the individual learner, giving introspective supplements and showing personal variables. The following entries, taken from the journals and presented without correction of any kind, provide evidence that this claim is true:

February 9, 1982: Today we learned a little more on the Indirect and direct object pronouns. It was very interesting to do this kind of this because it was harder than the other grammar lessons we had and it made you think a little (lot) bit. I found that after awhile it was fairly easy to write down what you wanted to say, but was very hard to get the swing of things. My companion and I started on a Spanish Marathon yesterday and have done well so far. I felt my speaking ability hadn't improved lately much so this should help us out to think more and stuff. (Journal of YE11)

February 9, 1982: Today we studied Indirect objects and Direct objects. It's difficult, but we are all catching on. I think the more we use it, the better we'll understand it. In class when the teacher is asking us to respond to questions (in this case, using indirect and direct object pronouns), it is much more difficult to respond or answer correctly when you're "on the spot," but being "on the spot" is what helps, I think, to really learn a concept. (Journal of YE12)

February 9, 1982: Today we went over indirect/direct objects in the language and boy that sure is tough. I think I'm understanding it more & more each day. I feel I'm starting to think more & more in Spaninh & not have to translate every single word. The language gets a little easier each day. Constant use & practice helps tremendously! (Journal of YE02)

February 9, 1982: Today we reviewed the use of direct and indirect object pronouns. It is difficult to use both direct and indirect pronouns at the same time, although I can use one at a time without much thought. I feel that I am progressing as I should and I am doing well. (Journal of YE04)

February 9, 1982: Today we studied direct & indirect objects. It seems everytime I start to feel like I am able to catch on something new comes up and goes way over my head. I was able to understand but only if I could write it down and take a lot of time to figure it out. (Name of teacher) sure is a good teacher though anyone who is able to make me understand this stuff is reall talented. I am not holding up my end by retainning it. I just hope after enough practice and hearing it used it will come back to me and I will be able to pick it up. (Journal of YE06)

February 9, 1982: Today we reviewd somemore the Indirect object pronouns and Direct objet pronouns. I feel that I am begining to understand it better than I have ever been able to before! I feel that I am progresing more in the language more and more each day. I am trying to learn more vocabulary each day. Some of the things that I look up I have to look up five or six different times in or-

der to remember it. Other things I can pick up just looking it up or hearing it one time. It is very interesting the different word that I have been able to pick up. (Journal of YE07)

February 9, 1982: Fried brain syndrom is what it's called & how I feel. Today we first learned about indirect & direct object actually we learned a week or so ago & went over it again that is not the simplest thing in the world for sure then all day we've been practicing for DMC tommorrow & passing off charlas to catch up so we are able to start H pretty soon my how time flies only 3 more charlas to learn & 3 weeks to do it in so we should have no problem. Since I've been speaking SYL better my language has improved immensely & that makes me happy. (Journal of YS02)

Obviously there are some commonalities, such as mention of what the subject matter of the lesson was (direct/indirect pronouns), but the characteristics of the learners as they tackle that subject matter, as well as the language learning in general, are decidedly individual and show up in the journals as the research methodologists have claimed.

On the other hand, participant observation is supposed to be good for showing the influence of school, community, and societal context. There was evidence in this study that the participant observation did provide that kind of data. For example, one of the first things that I was able to see consistently as a participant observer was how disturbed the older learners were by the schedule at the Missionary Training Center. They felt that there were too many interruptions in the language learning. This became apparent by the grimaces in the classroom when a meeting about welfare services was announced. It also became apparent when I would find people studying in their dormitory rooms when they had been scheduled for other kinds of training. These learners were finding the additional training to be counterproductive. As one of them put it to me, "It doesn't matter what else we know how to do. If we can't speak

the language, we can't do it anyway." As a participant observer, I felt some of the same frustration with the changing schedule. I would go the the classroom expecting to find a class and I'd find that no one was there because of a special excursion to somewhere. The schedule is only one example of the ways that it was obvious the context impinged on the learning.

Neverthess, I think it would be wrong to claim that diary studies and participant observation contrast completely on what they reveal. The learners' obsession with the schedule (i. e., an influence of the school) was also very evident in their diaries. In fact, time and scheduling was the single most-mentioned factor in the journals overall. While a single journal may not have made this societal influence clear as anything other than a personal variable, a collection of journals did.

Also, the participant observation can be a means of getting at personal variables if the researcher has individual contact with the learners. The following excerpts from some of the field notes, for example, demonstrates a very personal motivation for learning felt by one of the learners:

> SS07 said that she would try to memorize some little lines to say to her husband when he returned from class, but as soon as she would go to say them, she would forget what they were.(Observation 9, p. 2)
>
> . . . . . .
>
> She said that she had the sweetest husband in the world. She didn't know how she got him--"Well, I chased him until I caught him." I said, "You chased him until he caught you." She smiled. She said she had told her husband that if there was any way for him to go on this mission alone so that she would not hold him back, she would go home. He told her that he couldn't do it alone even if there was a rule he could. (Observation 9, p. 5)

The personal factor in this case--motivation to please her husband--showed up more clearly in the participant observation than in the journals. In other words, depending on how each is carried out, there is not as great a distinction between the individual factors gained in diary study and the societal factors gained in participant observation as might be thought.

The second claim that is made for the journals is that they take place in the most natural of settings, that the research effect is diminished. This claim is not upheld. The journals of the learners in my study show that the journal keeping itself makes a difference in the learning situation. For example, we have the following quotes from journals of the learners:

> I have been asked to write in this journal for 15 minutes a day and it will be difficult because I already write in my daily journal, but if it might help some one else ... (Journal of SE07)
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Didn't continue because of illness--needed to let up on work. (Journal of SE10)

Two corollaries to the idea of diary studies revealing learning in the natural setting-- that dual role as participant and diarist is an obstacle and that retrospective journals lose immediacy-- were difficult, if not impossible, to judge with the available data. The point about the re-written versions losing essence may be judged by noting the differences between examples given in this paper which contain the learners' own words and those containing paraphrases or general restatements of what the diarists said.

On the other hand, methodologists say that participant observation may cause the setting to be disturbed by the observer particularly if the observer is not a participant. This claim was upheld. The journals

which were kept at the same time that the participant observation was taking place give ample evidence that the observer changed the setting. For example,

> Today Elder Someone was in the class with several others coming to visit--a woman from BYU and Elder Another and then later Elder One More. At least didn't get bored nor lonesome. (Journal of SE04)
>
> I'm not sure what my reaction is to having too many visitors (spies) (that's a harsh word). I guess it tends to keep us on our toes and makes us want to learn faster. (Journal of SE04)
>
> Elder Teacher was here waiting when I got back at 8:30 & we started working on the "ser" verb & I was putting together some sentences on equative sentences & Elder Teacher had stepped out in the hall waiting for me to complete the sentences & a lady tapped on my door & I invited her in. She is doing a research on the M. T. C. She listened to me @ length & then observed while Elder T. worked with me on translating sentences verbally in Espanol & we played a little guessing game in Espanol. The morning went well. (Journal of SS07)

Out of 76 factors studied in this language learning situation, the research intrusion was mentioned thirty-fifth most often by the older learners and twenty-ninth most often by the younger learners (Brown, 1983). So, although naturalistic methods do seem to allow study in "more natural" settings than traditional methods do, both naturalistic methods studied here, contrary to claims, did change the learning situation. The diary study did it less than the participant observation, but both did it.

One final claim for the diary study is that it could be used as a tool for purposes other than research. The other purposes might be evaluation, self-improvement, or orientation for other learners. There was some evidence that this claim was true. For example, the following excerpt shows a learner recognizing his own progress as well as evluating ways to improve the training program:

> That was thurs., yesterday and today we attacted the verbs in their various forms, and a miracle started to happen. I began to understand and remember. How grateful I am! I suggested that we take the most likely verbs that I would be using and conjugate them in three tenses only, past, present, and future, and bear down on them, and it started to work. I believe we try to absorb too much at one time. We can in no way learn to speak all those conjugations to be specific, if we can learn to use the most important verbs in the most important forms or conjugations that would be the best thing we could learn while here. (Journal of SE07)

Like this learner, many other learners gave evidence in their journals of being aware of their progress. It may be that the awareness would have come without the journals, but writing it down made it very evident.

The final claim for participant observation, which this study also upheld, was the claim that it allows for checking the validity of conclusions reached during the research. This can be seen in the following example where, in the process of one participant observation, one of the learners told me that her husband was in a different class because he had spoken quite a bit of Spanish with Mexican friends when he was young. Since several other persons had alluded to the fact that people were better at language learning because of previous experience, I had begun to feel that the learners saw previous experience with a language as a plus in <u>all</u> situations. The following is an excerpt from the field notes showing what happened as I was checking this conclusion:

> SE07 asked me what I was doing there. I told him that I was going to UCLA but that I was at the MTC doing a study on what the MTC experience was like. I told him that his wife had told me that he had learned Spanish by speaking with his friends when he was young. He said that he had wanted to learn it so he was talking to a friend at the mine where he worked. He said that he made a mistake and that his friend laughed at him and that he didn't try much after that because he didn't want to be laughed at. He said that he had said, "la gato" and his friend had laughed and said that he said "the she-cat."(Observation 10, p. 2)

This incident did not show my conclusion to be wrong, but it did show the need for refinement. The learners recognized both good and bad influence from previous experience. At another time I was able to check the influence of one particular aspect of the MTC program (the "Speak Your Language" program) by incorporating into my notes a sheet containing the students' own assessments of how well they were using the program.

It could be seen, then, from this study that some of the claims for the two naturalistic methods were upheld and some needed to be modified. However, this study also made it possible to suggest other strengths and weaknesses which language research methodologists had not emphasized but which might be important in the making of wise research decisions. The first difference of great importance has to do with the ease of gathering the data. Participant observation has the disadvantage of requiring more researcher time in the gathering of the data. This is true even if the researcher is a full participant. Participant observation calls for a complete overview of the situation, so time must be spent outside the class and in different places and different times observing and making notes. Both participant observation and diary studies require considerable time writing up the data and analyzing it, but participant observation takes more time in gathering the data.

On the other hand, participant observation has the advantage in the certainty of getting the data. This advantage is true, however, only when the researcher is not the sole diarist. It is not possible (nor, I think, desirable) to force learners to keep diaries. Because of this, it is possible to lose some or all of your data. In my own research

situation, for example, I had to replce my original group of young subjects because an insufficient number of them turned in journals. As a researcher, you are more certain of actually having data to work with when you use participant observation.

Finally, diary studies have an advantage in that the data in them are more easily quantified. A process called content analysis, for example, can be used more easily with the journals and can even make use of the computer to provide interesting and enlightening quantified data. In my study, for instance, I was able to get a score for the number of times each learner mentioned a particular subject and, thus, to get a picture of the overall focus and attitudes of the learners.

In summary, then, this comparative study suggests that researchers may want to choose between doing a diary study and doing a participant observation on the basis of the following factors:

1. The need to focus on personal individual learner variables or on the influence of the society. A diary study is better for personal variables although participant observation can also reveal them if a lot of interviewing is used. A participant observation is better for societal variables although a diary study can also reveal them if diaries come from several learners.

2. The desire not to change the learning situation. A participant observation changes the situation quite a bit unless the observer is a full participant. A diary study can change the situation although it is probably the most natural of all possible research choices (in a literate society).

3. The desire to let the research have immediate use for learners. A diary study allows for self-evaluation, improvement, and growth and a diary study can provide orientation for other learners.

4. The desire to validate findings with persons actually in the situation. A participant observation allows for a lot of double checking of findings.

5. The personal time available to the researcher. A participant observation requires considerably more.

6. The need to be sure of getting the data. Participant observation provides more security.

7. The desire to have or present quantifiable data. A diary study is generally easier than a participant observation.

There may be many other differences, but these are the ones which became most noticeable in this comparative study. If researchers can keep these differences in mind, they should be able to tell which (if either) of these two naturalistic methods would be best to use as their window on the language learning classroom.

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Appendix A

INSTRUCTIONS FOR JOURNALS

This journal has two purposes. The first is to help you with your language learning. As you write about what you think and feel as a language learner, you will understand yourself and your experience better.

The second purpose is to increase the overall knowledge about language learning so that learning can be increased. You will be asked to leave your language learning journal when you leave the MTC. However, your journal will not be read by teachers at the MTC. It will be read by researchers interested in language learning.

Your identity and the identity of others you may write about will be unknown (unless you wish it otherwise) to anyone except the researchers.

You will be given 15 minutes a day to write. Please write as if this were your personal journal about your language learning experience.